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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-sixth year

Letter dated 14 January 1991 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I would like to draw your most urgent attention to the growing dangers faced by the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, at this time of heightened tension in the region and to express the Committee's apprehension and deep concern at the possible tragic repercussions of a war in the Gulf for their safety and protection.

In an urgent appeal for the protection of Palestinians dated 11 January 1991, the Palestine Human Rights Information Centre of the Arab Studies Society at Jerusalem has stated that there are indications that a mass transfer of Palestinians could be carried out in the event of war. The newspaper Hadashot of 10 January 1991 was reported to have disclosed that, according to information leaked by settler circles to the Peace Now movement, settlers serving in military reserve units in the West Bank are planning a "mass evacuation" of Palestinians if war breaks out. A former head of Israeli military intelligence, writing in The Jerusalem Post of 8 January 1991, was reported to have pointed out that in a war situation Israel could be expected to lift all moral and legal restraints on the Israeli Defence Forces in the occupied territory and that this could very likely result in a new mass exodus of Palestinians to the east.

The New York Times reported on 14 January 1991 that prominent Palestinian physicians at Jerusalem in a press conference stressed the inadequacy and unpreparedness of the medical system in the occupied territories for treating victims of war. Their overriding concern, however, was that a state of chaos would be used as a cover by Israel to carry out mass killings and forcible transfer of

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Palestinians while international attention was focused elsewhere. The paper also reported that it was expected that in the event of war the occupied territories would be immediately placed under full curfew, thus denying access to journalists and human rights observers.

The Palestinians' deep sense of vulnerability and fear for the future is further aggravated by the dramatic deterioration of the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory in recent weeks, as shown by the rapid increase in Palestinian casualties and the recent deportation by Israel of four activists from the Gaza Strip in total disregard for the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The experience of previous wars in the region and since the beginning of the intifadah shows in no uncertain terms that Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory face a real threat, which must be urgently and firmly addressed by the Security Council and by the international community as a whole. On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I appeal urgently to you and to all concerned to take immediately all necessary action to ensure the safety and protection of Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, in all circumstances.

I would like to request that the present letter be circulated as a document of the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 23, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Absa Claude DIALLO
Chairman
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People